



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The briefer history is essentially the larger one condensed, with much omitted that makes the latter interesting. In fact, it may be characterized as a syllabus, and should serve as a convenient book of reference for names, dates and the leading conceptions in philosophical literature from Cusanus to William James. As a textbook, it is likely to be dry reading—as textbooks in the history of philosophy usually are.

A "chronology of the chief works in philosophy," adds much to the usefulness of the book.

University of Illinois.

ARTHUR H. DANIELS.

*A RE-INTERPRETATION OF GERMANIC ANTIQUITY.**

In the ninth volume of this Journal (1910, pp. 269-278) I published a somewhat extensive discussion of Vilhelm Grønbech's first volume of the above series, expressing some anticipations with regard to the remaining volumes. Within an amazingly short time the three volumes announced have appeared which, considering only their bulk of together ca. 610 large pages, is an astonishing performance; but doubly remarkable through their closely reasoned and altogether original contents which entirely bear out the high expectations then entertained.

In letting pass before his mind the profusion of new ideas unfolded in these volumes your reviewer more than ever regrets that they will practically be beyond the reach of all but Scandinavian students of Germanic antiquity; the difficulty being not only their Danish dress, but also the curiously individual style—I may almost say, idiom—which betrays unmistakable influence, whether direct or indirect, of Søren Kierkegaard; still is entirely Grønbech's own. As was remarked concerning the first volume, nothing short of a complete translation could give a fair idea of the contents, for the reason that no *new* information is offered here, but rather the *interpretation* of things known but not sufficiently understood in their bearings, their emotional and ethnic contents. It is a subtle running commentary on the grievously misunderstood text of Germanic Antiquity. Nor is it conveniently summarized by chapter headings or by paragraphs, not being written as a textbook, or handbook, or any other kind of professorial schoolbook; but, rather, as a vast rumination, carried on with great breadth of vision, and backed up by an astounding learning. Let then what is said in the following be taken rather by way of suggestion than as a summary.

**Vor Folkeæt i Oldtiden. (Our race in Antiquity). Vilhelm Grønbech: V. Pio, Copenhagen. Udgivet med Understøttelse af Carlsberg-Fondet. Vol. I: Lykkemand Og Niding. (1909) Vol. II: Midgaard og Menneskelivet. (1912) Vol. III: Helligdom og Helligdom. (1912) Vol. IV: Menneskelivet og Guderne. (1912)*

Grönbech rightly protests against the attitude assumed by so many that the work of the Germanic scholar is done when the student of motif and source has unravelled the composition of the literary remains, when the literary historian has mapped them, and the ethnologist, archaeologist, jurist, folklorist each have shed light on this and that region of past life; when the historian has woven all into a connected story of how it was and how it came to be, and why—even after all is safely tucked away between the covers of a portly “Grundriss.” When all this is done; or, rather, notwithstanding all that has been done, it will require the sympathy and the creative imagination of the scholar-poet really to understand, i. e. to re-create, the past. This is a commonplace to poetry where, however, only the “Knotenpunkte” of history can, by the nature of the case, be considered worthy of treatment.* Grönbech is one of the first to see the necessity of the “poetic” treatment of the whole ethos of a race in a work laying claim to scholarly accuracy as well, in order to penetrate into the *spirit* of a civilization.

After saying so much in commendation of an enterprise carried out on such a grand scope it must be admitted that there is an element of weakness inherent in its very plan. It will be read, studied, discussed by all interested in Germanic Antiquity. It will be admired, enthusiastically acclaimed, perhaps, as a precursor of a new vision; but it is more than doubtful whether it will have that effect of revolutionizing our methods of interpretation which the author evidently expects. My criticism—which, for that matter, perhaps no one anticipates more surely than the author himself—is that the testimony of a thousand years is weighed in a balance where the weights themselves are unknown. G. sets out to determine the soul life of “our ancestors” without shrinking for a moment from the appalling difficulty of the undertaking. Who are the ancestors, we may ask; and when were they “at their best,” i. e. when is the diagnosis most reliable; and who is to be the judge? The first question offers the least difficulty; for, after all, the various Germanic tribes present throughout their history a very striking racial homogeneity which was, very likely, reflected in similar views and re-actions, however strongly they were affected by varying physical surroundings and the influences of contiguous southern and western civilizations. But when we come to the *when?* the necessity of a closer definition of time becomes at once apparent. Teutons of what time? Of the Migration Period, of the Viking Age, of the Prehistoric times? It is all very well to say that “in the civilization of nations hundreds of years frequently

*What I mean is that the poet is limited by his art to individual problems. At most he can treat of a small segment of history. He may creatively interpret the character, say, of Maria Stuart, but not the Elizabethan Age. The novelist is only apparently more free. Gobineau's and Burckhardt's books on the Renaissance are, each in its way, attempts in the same direction as Grönbech's, viz. to interpret a whole epoch.

are as one day," or that "feelings scarcely changed between the generations that subverted the Roman Empire and that of the Christian poet who interprets the words of Thomas to his Saxons." We hesitate when we consider the possible internal, spontaneous, economical, or spiritual changes of a thousand years! Moreover, the author must not be surprised if his views will not appeal to all, seeing that he makes himself the sole judge of the admissibility or weight of all testimony; when e. g. certain customs of 18th and 19th century rural Norway and Sweden, certain ceremonies of Mediaeval guilds, certain survivals in Scandinavian laws are admitted as valuable testimony, whereas certain passages in, let us say, an Icelandic saga, in the Anglosaxon epics, are dismissed or discounted as not bearing the stamp of originality. In most cases we follow trustingly, willingly; but this ought not to blind us to the fact that we are citing instances that suit our theory,—which is based on those selfsame instances! G. has in his mind the Platonic "idea" of the Teuton and his typical reactions. It is the most convincing to me, personally, it has been so to most reviewers. Nevertheless, who shall say there is no other, or others, as justifiable?

There is still another aspect of the matter which forced itself on my attention. The idea is, not to explain the old ways of thinking by modern thought (as do the "learned men" for whom Grönbech shows a very round contempt); but, on the contrary, by entering fully and habitually into them, *sharing* them, in order finally to think them ourselves. Now it is remarkable to witness the extreme contortions of the speculatively reflective mind indulged in, in order to extract the secret of the child of nature's way of thinking. This is particularly true of the first chapters of the second volume, dealing with the materials and psychology of primitive poetry. Here the author seeks by means of the subtlest application of conscious thought to penetrate into the unconscious life of primitive man. And the results "arrived at" smack dangerously of our ultra civilization which understands the barbarian better than the barbarian understands himself—and appreciates him aesthetically. Then, there certainly is more system interpreted into the Teuton's conduct of life than he ever thought of putting into it.* Still, if the poet's line expands for whatever of meaning we can put into it we ought to grant that the traditions of centuries, however crude, are capable of an infinitude of interpretations.

Let it not be thought that the author's method is in any respect amateurish and loose; on the contrary, the subtly reasoning psychologist is everywhere carefully intrenched behind sources and references. In fact, not the least interesting feature of his work are the notes in which a huge mass of learned references now and then is conglomerated to an impressive effect. Never-

* Cf. e. g. sun and moon idea, vol. II, p. 63 ff.

theless, the author struggles with might and main not to write a textbook. The legions of articles, treatises, investigations, notes, etc., etc. previously written on kindred matters are simply ignored, except when drawing a sharp fire of irony.

It cannot be my purpose to state in a concise and definite way just what these volumes contain beyond reiterating that, in the main, it is a re-interpretation of Germanic ethos as manifested in Germanic life, manners, history, law, religion. A synopsis is not possible, partly because of the nature of the work, partly because of Grönbech's sovereign contempt of the textbook method. As already indicated, his form is as much *sui generis* as his style. The nonchalant chapter headings hardly reveal the nature of the contents—to put it mildly—and might in most cases be moved a dozen pages backward or forward *ad libitum*, without making any appreciable difference. Those of vol. II, e. g., are: (1) The World, (2) Life, (3) To Live, (4) Soul, (5) Birth and End of Life, (6) Death, (7) Who is Akin?—which is just a shade better than vol. I whose headings seemed to mock the trustful reader in a tantalizing manner. In fact, the chapter headings show a tendency to become more concrete as we go along.* As to the mysterious titles of the various volumes, any one will fit any other as well. One must not be pedantic!

If I understand the author aright he wishes to show forth the entire nervous system, as it were, of the ancient Germanic life by dwelling on the comparatively few main ganglia, and from these central stations trace the single nerves in their ramifications and thus detect their special functions. Such ganglia—it does not matter whether we are very precise—were, in vol. I, “honor” and its counterpart “good fortune,” “frith,” and “kin.” In the remaining volumes, Grönbech returns to the attack and the chapter headings cited may serve, with some repetitions and omissions, as indications of the points of view taken.

Like Socrates, G. is satisfied ever to say the same about the same. He does not tire of elaborating the primitive concepts, such as honor, kin, revenge. Again and again he records the results of his daring thought experiments undertaken to feel himself back, as it were, into his hypothetic attitude of the Past. Passionate seeker that he is he simply forces entrance into the consciousness of the Pre-Christian mind. If others have studied the Past to understand the Present he has certainly trained his lenses to bring the far away into our range of vision. Only, his chief means is his poetic vision.

*Those of Vol. iii are: (1) Treasure (2) The Sword of Victory (3) Naming and Inheriting (4) Exchange of Gifts, (5) Fellowship at Table (or of Food) (6) Holiness(!), Those of Vol. iv: (1) Temple (2) Around the Ale Bowl (3) Prayer and Sacrifice (4) Prosperity and Peace (*Til aar og fred*) (5) Play and Pledge (6) To Sacrifice (7) The Stillness and the Noise at the Feast.

The foregoing remarks will, it is hoped, make it plain that one of the strongest impressions left in the readers mind, after the perusal of these volumes, is that this re-interpretation of Germanic Antiquity would seem to deal a blow to those who, because of the same race, or as students of Germanic languages and literatures, or of some other segment of the ancient life of the Teutons, blandly imagine that they, eo ipso, have the necessary qualifications to understand the soul life of their ancestors of a thousand years ago, before the Renaissance, before the introduction of Christianity. To them, these volumes will be a much needed lesson in humility.

A few paragraphs illustrative of Grönbech's art may be welcome. They are freely translated. Even so, most of the flavor of the original will, I fear, have evaporated in the process.

'*Hamingja*' ("good-fortune") Combinations, Vol. II, p. 140 f. notwithstanding their thirst for fame and glory, most of the old Teutons had to go to their grave without leaving behind them any other monument for after times than, perhaps a mention in the family tree. To us, these rows of names are a rigmarole and nothing else; but for those who bore these names the register was in itself a history, or a heroic poem, and the portrayal of a family character, and we need no special commentary to re-experience something of the readiness of mind which made the rehearsing of the genealogical tree an earnest business and at the same time an edification for the family.

History knows little concerning king Penda of Mercia, and still less about his father, king Pybba. All we have is contained in a few church history notes, just about filling a paragraph, in the *Chronicles of Beda*, about a king who did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Only one single trait of human character has been handed down to us: heathen though he was he used no other weapon against the Christians than scorn when they did what their faith commanded them—so we are told. And by this grimace of scorn one seems to recognize in him one of those "singular" characters who might by rights occupy a place by the side of such as Harold Hairfair, Earl Hakon, or Chlodevech, but even if Penda was the founder of an empire and one who like Harold erected a chieftainship into a kingdom, he was bound to perish with his race; nor did he fall because of the indignation of some fathers of the church. Civilization itself felled him with her irrevocable judgment as one who resisted the onward flow of progress. For in England, very differently from Scandinavia, the new times and the new faith were not built into the old, but each pile which was rammed down to support the new faith served also to tie down the old and prevent it from rising to the surface again. But if the Mercian empire remained standing even after the fall of its kings and its civilization; if it successfully weathered the crisis and thereupon again maintained itself as one of the great

powers of England, it was because these "wild" warriors, Penda and his kin, had also been resourceful men who had built a strong foundation for their royal hamingja. Their race had, like that of Halfdan in Norway and that of the Merovingians in France, understood to lead the fortunes of other races into their own. One of the surest signs of their ability to secure their growth in fortune by fetching some of it from elsewhere is seen in their affinity with the royal house of Wessex. We do not know how the relationship began; only so much is sure that Penda's sister was married to King Cœnwealh of Wessex. And now we see that already one of Penda's brothers is called after the brother-in-law, being also called Cœnwealh; and notwithstanding the fact that the peace soon was broken by the West Saxon king putting away his wife, Cœnwealh's branch of the family continues with West-Saxon names only. Moreover the new hamingja is transplanted to two of Penda's grandsons: in Wulfhere's son Cœnred and in Æthelred's son Ceolred, notwithstanding the one's mother was Kentish and the other's Northumbrian.

The aspirations of the same family can be traced also in the North: Penda's stubborn fights with the Christian kings Oswald and Oswin of Northumberland in some way or other are connected with the fact that two of his sons were married to daughters of Oswin. And already in the same generation we find in the genealogical tree of the Mercian kings the characteristic Northumbrian names, bearing witness of a family proud of their gods. Penda's brother Eowa called his two sons Alwih and Osmod. Also the element *æthel*, occurring in one of Penda's own sons, Æthelred, is ancient in Northumberland but is not an unmistakable criterion of that family because of its rather general nature.

Another family of royal climbers whose names still bear witness to the possibility of enriching one's hamingja is that of the Merovingians. Their first historic name is Childeric. This king is most entitled to be regarded the unifier of the Franks. Like Harold Hairfair, the unifier of the realm of Norway, he derived part of his hamingja from a neighboring kingdom. We are told that he sojourned for sometime in Thuringia, with King Bisinus, and that Bisinus's queen followed him home out of admiration for his manhood, and became mother to the next great name in the race, Chlodevech. We know nothing of what this legend may mean; but we may gather its importance from the fact that Childeric's two daughters are called Audeffleda and Alboffleda; just as one elsewhere finds names in *alb* and *aud* which point to Thuringian origin. Later on, Chlodevech allied himself to Theodoric the Great by giving him one of his daughters in marriage. As one historian expressly notes, Chlodevech expected a good deal from this alliance. Therefore, he was not slow to incorporate the great king's hamingja in his family by calling his son Theodoric,—The ensuing generations are characterized by their alliance with the

Burgundian kings. Names in *-gunn-* such as Gunnthram, and in *chrote-* such as Chrotesind are witnesses of the new affinity.—We are not able to know with any certainty what new names that appear in the list, such as Ingomar, Chramn, Charibert may signify as to relationship; very possibly, however, they are revivals in the family tree of rival Frankish houses whose hamingja had been absorbed in the fortunes of the victorious line. These adopted names signify first of all of course relationship, but also an arrogation of hamingja, good fortune. After once having taken into itself as much “soul” of the Burgundians as had the Merovingians one could with good assurance occupy that stranger throne, without danger of one’s fortune proving insufficient in the new land.

Over against these old realists who re-vitalized stranger luck and stranger’s right in their own flesh and blood our weak conceptions of acquisition by marriage and of inherited traits prove altogether insufficient.

Leg og Løfte—Play and Pledge. (Most of Chapter 5, Vol. IV)

There is something else needed in a feast through which men strengthen themselves in their divinity than only sacrifice. After the meal the people rise to play. After having brought their companion to rest (til sæde) in his burial mound, and giving him the necessary implements to carry on his new existence, they will, perhaps, engage in foot-races and have the singers recite for them. And, whether now one motivates one’s desire to play by one’s reverence of the gods, or of the dead, or the living, it will all come to the one fact that the sport has the same effect as the banquet indoors,—it is a link, a part of the sacrifice.

We know that all kinds of athletics were befitting the gathering together of men in antiquity. Ball play, horse fights, wrestling, are very frequently mentioned in the sagas; for the simple reason that the blood of the Icelanders frequently became heated at such occasions and the after effects were to be felt for a long time in the district. We have especially good technical descriptions of the horse fights. We are told how the stallions were led forward by the owners, how they raised themselves on their hind legs and bit one another, whilst the owner egged his animal on and supported it with his staff. These fights were regarded as contests of honor. The owner was regarded as intimately one with his fighting horse, so that *its* victory was his, *its* defeat a loss in honor to him; and very frequently the results of the horse fight were tested afterwards by a more than accidental clash between the men. Nothing is said about any connection with worship. Apparently, but only apparently, the fight had become a popular amusement.

The Norwegian horse fights still preserve indications of an original connection with the ritual. These *skei*, as they were called, occurred once a year; in Sætersdalen in August, in Telemarken

on St. Bartholomew, thus plainly belonging to an old religious district feast. First there were horse fights; then came wild races on bare back. And as the saying goes: "when the horses fight well there will be a good year." In this double aspect of the games, both as test of men's fortune, and an assurance of success for the entire district, there lies the probability that this custom embodies a very old rite.

From the point of view of the historian of civilization it is very significant that in the Germanic languages the word for play may also mean sacrifice; it is as characteristic for the rites that the word offers itself also as a kenning for *fight*. "Hild's play" is not the ad hoc invention of a poet but contains a deeper necessity. They played much in those days, and always in earnest; but the roughness was due not only to their heavy hands. The connotation which now preponderates in our use of the word play, which is the abstraction from the realities of life, is in entire contradiction to what was the very soul of play in the olden days. It was to be earnest, or else there was no justification for it. The more doughtily the parties fought, the greater the pleasure they had themselves and also the spectators of the gathering. "Now they have entertained us, let us then entertain the others" said the Icelander, when "they"—i. e., two of the company—had belabored each other so thoroughly that one of them never required to go on the holm again. Once, during his period of outlawry, Grettir saw himself surrounded by grateful people. It was the time he stole down in disguise to the district where the people were assembled, and where he by his strength made the game more than ordinarily interesting. When he left the company they offered him their warm thanks for the entertainment.—The heavenly *Einherjar* who enjoy the happiness of being able to awake each day with the expectation of striking one another dead were created—as all which is perfect in this world—in times when it had become impossible to live life perfectly, whether in poetry or in prose, when one had to concentrate all one's power to realize the ideal; and the ideal of Valhalla betrays by its splendor that the very next chastening of the ideal will take all life out of it;—or, in other words, will cause us to see its aesthetic emptiness as coarseness. But if the *Einherjar* represent the Silver Age it is because they strive to attempt as an ideal what the Golden Age really did; which again affords us a glimpse of the civilization that created them.

When the doors of Valhalla were closed and the church set their seal on them, the *Einherjar* seem to have been turned out over Norway and Sweden and to have taken their bloody ceremonial with them. At any rate, the Scandinavian farmers' ways in their feasts have served during long times as a telling contrast of tastes to our more peaceful civilization. The men of one period celebrate their banquets with the generous use of knives and axes, they take along their shrouds to the feast, in order to reassure

the women, so they will not be disturbed by the thought that they may be compelled to hurry home with their husbands so as to get them ready for burial before they are altogether stiff and cold. They ask after the number of killed, before venturing an opinion on the success of a banquet.—Another race shudders when contemplating an existence where life seems so insecure that every little event threatens it. We are astonished at the equanimity of the farmer who is sowing his fields, all the while aware that his expectations of harvesting the crop himself depend altogether on whether his neighbor celebrated a wedding meanwhile.

There is something Einheri-like about the farmer who triumphantly drives to the banquet with his well-whetted knife at his side. And if we were required to reckon relationship after degree these farmers really would be nearer the *Einherjar* than those Teutons who lived before Othin had got the full number of his host. Peasant culture is as it were a retarded Silver Age, a long drawn out decadence.

The feast was to be an event; that was required formerly. Something was to happen. For that reason people flocked about the narrator or singer who was able to let past deeds live again. Now these poor wretches of epic poets have to submit to being called delineators of character, for all they protest their innocence and in their simple way compel us to be satisfied with mere deeds and doers. When we modern readers are most naive and hasten to the end to see what is the outcome, the Ancients hold us back in descriptions of battle, as if to make comprehensible to us that the real enjoyment consists in the experience; when we hunt after ideas and leading thoughts, or after dramatic intensity, they heap all interest on the hero, his courage, his muscular strength, his ingenuity. To *experience* heroic deeds, to experience battles, experience victories, that was the pleasure of the listeners, that was the joy of the feast.

The greatest deed befitting the feast is the pledge. We encounter it in its most imposing form in the arvel, the feast in honor of the departed.

Indeed, nowhere is it as imperative that something should be *done*, for the banquet was the very expression for the rehabilitation of the family honor. The laws make this entirely plain in stating that the arvel is to be the lawful procedure to assure the position of the successor. The term "to inherit" has in it the force of two separate actions: to drink the arvel of somebody and to take up the deceased man's inheritance. From the narrative of the *Jónsvíkinga saga* we gather quite unmistakably that the rehabilitation concentrates on the beaker drunk to the memory of the one deceased. In the moment when the bragarfull, or pledge horn, was brought out and the pledge made over it, in that moment happens the decisive turn by which the family again receives a head and the family life again pulsates normally. At the

beginning of the banquet the heir sat on the step before and below the high-seat; but as soon as he has made the pledge and emptied the beaker he was led up to the seat his father had occupied. As the laws have it: "Then was he entitled to inheritance"; or, "then had he come by goods and honor of the deceased, and not before."

This one step, from the footboard to the high seat, presupposes a deep-going change in things: nothing were able to lift the son up from the position on the floor to the seat between the consecrated pillars, if he himself had not performed a deed worthy of him. This deed is expressed in the Old Norse *bragarfull* and in the Anglosaxon *gilp*; the former means just beaker of manhood or deed-cup; the latter has reference both to the pledge and the honor and respect the pledge has produced.

Undoubtedly there were idle pledges as well as true pledges. The latter are recognizable chiefly by their being a bodying forth of a past. As soon as the youth had pledged himself not to become *verrfedrungr* or person worse than his fathers, degenerate, he had taken up the fortune of his family and incorporated himself in its fortune. In pledging himself, he began to partake of all the fortunes his ancestors had laid in the drink that filled his beaker; he tasted the fortune of his race to hold great banquets, the fortune of his race to enjoy favorable winds at sea, to be victorious on the battle field; with this pledge he made all their banquets and all their victories his own. He himself was now the incarnation of his race and was regarded as he who had performed its deeds. Without boasting he might follow the example of Torkell Hak who had his ancestor's fight with an ogre carved on the pillars of his high seat and said: *that was I*.

Another point of view:

We who are born of a marriage between modern bourgeoisie and humanism, we cannot go from boxing to lyric poetry without spiritually changing our garments; and the trouble lies neither in our one-sided education nor in a lack of athletics. So soon as one no longer secures a rank in society by one's agility or strength the very possibility for giving athletics an organic place in civilization has disappeared. However great the enthusiasm we feel for a sound mind in a sound body, it will not help any one a whit to understand a man who from tender youth on trains his muscles with the purpose of securing a seat in the pantheon of his people; nor either to understand a man like Eindríde who gained confidence in the new faith by seeing King Olaf Tryggvason passing along the oars of a ship in motion or playing with three swords at once. This young chieftain looked at the king when he, after his exploit stepped back on deck again; he looked at him and was silent whilst he searched in the very bottom of his soul to find the certainty that in his own faith there were no gods or angels who would bear up a man in the air. As to the first of the two

men we have but a polite wonder left us, and we betray it in a naive enough fashion by our eagerness to get beauty and other abstract notions into our speech. And as to the latter—? We may be fortunate if the word jugglery does not escape us.

A place by its own right will be won by athletics only in that society where any division line between bodily and mental accomplishments is not known. And there it will never degrade the respect for poetry. Among the Teutons, as among other nations on the same level of civilization, poems and narrative gathered about the trial of strength, as in a place of acknowledged equality. The literature of the Icelanders began with their athletic contests at the feasts, and there was laid the foundation for their mastership in telling of the past. There also was cultivated that art-poetry which finally died of its own ornateness.

In *Béowulf* these forms of life are reproduced in ideal form, at the moment when the victory over the ogre has excited the people to festive jubilation. In the midst of their praises of *Béowulf* as the hero above all others, the horsemen start off on a horse race over the fields, and a king's man who has his mind richly stored with old lore and songs begins to compose a poem of praise, quickly joining word to word, telling of Sigmund the Volsung's wanderings, of his fights with beasts and giants, he who gained glory immortal and robbed the dragon's hoard of gold.

There was honor in hearing songs or tales about oneself or one's family; and this honor was of the same kind as all rehabilitation: it entered the soul and made a man more sound and strong. Egill received new courage to live through composing his *Sonartorek* ("Son's loss") about his last son; he had wanted to die, but now his vital spirits rose once more and he ascended the high seat again. Men were in a very real manner consoled for the departed kinsmen by hearing their praises sung. Thus Volustein's son Egill once came to Gest Olleifsson, a highly respected sage, and asked him whether he knew any counsel to lessen his father's crushing sorrow after Ogmund's death. Thereupon Gest composed the beginning of his *Ogmundsdraða*.

The importance of gifts, vol. iii, p. 66.

The evening before King *Æthelstan* fought his decisive battle against the Norwegians, near *Brunanburh*,—thus the English historian William of Malmesbury—a stranger harpist had come to the English camp who seated himself by the entrance to the king's tent and played so beautifully that the king commanded him to play to please the company during the meal. After the meal, when the council of war was to be held, the harp player was sent away with a gift; but one of the men, who must have had his own reasons for watching the stranger closely, saw that he concealed the gold in the earth before leaving; and he advised King *Æthelstan* to remove his tent since the guest was none else but *Olaf Sigtrysson* the king of the Norwegians. . . .

Now, of course, William does not comprehend Olaf's motif for doing as he did; he thinks his action must have had as cause the Norwegian king's contempt for the gift. And possibly Olaf himself would have found it somewhat difficult to explain his action; but he undoubtedly felt that, in case he should let the stranger will (i. e. the force inherent in the gift) cling to him he would have to be prepared to have it turn against him, aye even that his own will and insight would betray him so as not only to hinder his progress but also directly to contribute to his ruin. A man like the astute Frank Chlodevech knew well how to make use of the power of inanimate things to bind the souls. He had in all secrecy sent gifts to the Burgundian princess Chrotilde; but when he, later on, officially asked for her hand, he was curtly refused by her uncle. Then the Burgundians exclaimed: Find out, first, whether or no gifts from him have been received secretly, lest he will be given the opportunity to fall upon you; or else you will not be victorious by the justice of your cause, "for terrible is Chlodevech's heathen rage," as the poor chronicler fashions the reply in order to put as much meaning into it as possible.

This distrust of gifts—on account of all they implied—stayed for a long time with the Mediæval mind. In the Danish ballad of Marsk Stig the royal lady-killer by no means speaks veiledly when he addresses the lady: "Here sittest thou, beautiful lady Ingeborg, and if you wilt show me favor, then sew me a shirt and adorn it with red gold." Ingeborg makes answer: "And if I should sew you a shirt and adorn it with gold, then know for sooth, lord king, I should not be true to sir Marsk Stig." If she had done the king's will she would have been more than merely inadvertent, she would have thereby yielded herself altogether to him.—In the Icelandic saga, the woman's reply immediately assumes the malignance of revenge: Early one morning, Kormak rode from his ship and went to find Steingerd. He engaged her in conversation and asked her to sew him a shirt. She answered that he might as well have stayed away; for neither Thorvald, her husband, nor her kinsmen would let such an affront remain unavenged.

LEE M. HOLLANDER

University of Wisconsin.

THE POEMS OF JOHN DONNE. Edited from the Old Editions and Numerous Manuscripts, with Introductions and a Commentary, by Herbert J. C. Grierson. Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1912. 2 Vols., pp. xxiv and 474, cliii and 275.

Professor Grierson's chapter on Donne in the fourth volume of the *Cambridge History of English Literature* showed a scholarship, an insight, and a sympathy with his subject that augured well for his promised edition of the poet. Probably there is no seventeenth